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THE LOCARNO SECURITY CONFERENCE

This report covers the essential fact background of the security negotiations which commence at Locarno October 5, defining the basis of the proposed pact, and outlining previous efforts to achieve security since 1918. It deals with the following points which have direct bearing on the present negotiations:

The Security Problem at the Peace Conference

Security Through Military Alliances, 1920-24

Anglo-French Negotiations, 1922

Efforts Through the League of Nations, 1922-24

German Security Proposals, 1922-25

Negotiations Leading to Locarno Conference.

THE SECURITY PROBLEM AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE, 1918-19

(1) French Proposals at the Conference

(a) The Rhine Frontier

As a measure of security against another invasion of their frontiers, the French at the Paris Peace Conference demanded the fixing of Germany's western frontier at the Rhine, the occupation of the Rhine frontier by an inter-Allied force under the mandate of the League of Nations, and the creation of one or more independent states out of the territories on the left bank of the Rhine, except Alsace-Lorraine. These proposals did not find favor with the Allies as a whole.

(b) The League of Nations as Defensive Alliance

France also endeavored to obtain security through the proposed League of Nations. The French members of the Commission which was drafting the League Covenant tried to make the League into a strong defensive alliance with an international army under an international general staff. This attempt failed, due

mainly to the determined opposition of the American and British members of the Commission.

Since the Versailles Treaty did not meet the French demands for the Rhine frontier and an international army under the League, it was regarded by the French as wholly inadequate to guarantee their security.

(c) The Tripartite Pact - 1919

As an alternative to the French demand for a strategic frontier on the Rhine, Lloyd George and Wilson had offered to France parallel treaties of guarantee, generally spoken of together as the Tripartite Pact. These treaties provided that in case the stipulations of the Peace Treaty in regard to the demilitarization of the left bank of the Rhine "may not at first provide adequate security and protection to France", Great Britain and the United States would "come immediately to her assistance in the event of an unprovoked movement of aggression against her being made by Germany".

Since each of these treaties was to come into force only when the other had been ratified, the failure of the United States to ratify the Franco-American treaty rendered the Franco-British treaty inoperative.

(2) Guarantees of Security Provided by the Peace Treaty

The Treaty of Versailles as finally signed gave only a measure of satisfaction to French demands. It contained a number of provisions intended to guarantee the security of Europe in general, and France and Belgium in particular.

(a) Articles 42 to 44 provided for the permanent demilitarization of the left bank of the Rhine and of a zone on the right bank.

(b) Articles 159-213 provided for drastic reduction and limitation of Germany's armaments, under the supervision of inter-Allied commissions of control. The purpose of these clauses, as stated in a preamble, was "to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of armaments of all nations". In other words, it was not intended to establish a permanent situation so overwhelmingly in Germany's disfavor.

The treaties of Saint Germain, Trianon and Neuilly contained similar provisions for the disarmament of Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria.

(c) Articles 428 to 432 provided for Allied occupation of the Rhine bridgeheads during a period of fifteen years, with evacuation of a part of the area after five years, of a further

area after ten years, and complete evacuation after fifteen years. Evacuation was made contingent on Germany's fulfilling her obligations under the peace treaty.

Seeing in the disarmament of Germany at least a partial guarantee of her own security, France took an anxious interest in the execution of the military, naval and air clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Besides watching the progress of German disarmament through the inter-Allied commissions of control, she repeatedly urged the Council of the League of Nations to make preparations to take over the supervision of German armaments after these commissions had finished their work. When the Inter-Allied Military Commission reported that Germany had failed to execute all the disarmament provisions, Cologne was not evacuated by the British on January 10, 1925, as provided by the Versailles Treaty.

SECURITY THROUGH MILITARY ALLIANCES

Their previous attempts at security having failed, various European states under the diplomatic leadership of France sought to obtain security by a system of military alliances.

(1) Franco-Belgian Military Convention, September 1920

The text of this convention has not been made public, but was officially announced as a military understanding between the French and the Belgian chiefs of staff, the object of which was "to reinforce the guarantees of peace and security resulting from the Covenant of the League of Nations". Under the Covenant, however, France and Belgium are bound to register every treaty with the Secretariat of the League for publication; in fact, no treaty entered into by members of the League is binding "until so registered".

(2) Franco-Polish Treaty of Alliance, February 19, 1921

Under the terms of this treaty, Poland and France mutually promise to "concert with each other about all questions of foreign policy which interest the two states", to undertake "joint action and mutual support" in the economic field, and to "concert with each other with a view to the defense of their territory and the safeguarding of their legitimate interests", in case either becomes a victim of unprovoked aggression. It is widely believed that this general promise of military aid has been supplemented by a secret military convention. If such a secret convention exists, it too contravenes the Covenant.

(3) French-Czechoslovak Treaty of Alliance, January 25, 1924

The parties to this treaty agree to take concerted action not only in case their security is threatened, but in all matters which "may tend to subvert the situation created by the Treaties of Peace of which both parties are signatories". More particularly, they agree to uphold the present status of Austria and Hungary, and to take joint action in case of an

attempt to restore the Hohenzollern dynasty in Germany. Furthermore, they agree to consult each other about any further agreements affecting their policy in Central Europe, and to communicate to each other all such agreements already entered into

(4) The Little Entente

Some of the countries which emerged from the Peace Conference as new states, or with their frontiers greatly expanded, have sought to guarantee their present status by means of alliances among themselves. The most important of these alliances is the Little Entente, established by treaties between Czechoslovakia, Roumania and Jugoslavia. The various members of the Little Entente also have treaties with other states.

ANGLO-FRENCH NEGOTIATIONS - 1922

By this series of alliances France has tried to make up for the failure to obtain either the Rhine frontier or the alliance with Great Britain and the United States. Meanwhile, the idea of an Anglo-French alliance had never been totally abandoned. The subject was discussed in the diplomatic correspondence which preceded the Cannes Conference in January, 1922.

(1) The Cannes Draft - January, 1922

At the Cannes Conference on January 11, 1922, Mr. Lloyd George handed to M. Briand a draft treaty very similar to the defunct treaty of guarantee of 1919. Like that treaty, the Cannes draft was a one-sided guarantee in favor of France directed against Germany. Great Britain promised to "place herself at the side of France with her naval, military and air forces" in case of "direct and unprovoked aggression against the soil of France by Germany".

The greatest objection to the draft, from the French point of view, was that it provided no guarantee for the eastern frontiers of Germany. Because he expressed himself favorably toward the draft, M. Briand was accused of having yielded too much, and consequently had to resign.

(2) The Poincaré Draft

His successor, M. Poincaré, attempted to continue the negotiations, submitting a draft dated January 23, 1922. This draft, which was rejected by Lord Curzon, contained a provision for concerted action on all questions which might endanger the peace or disturb the general situation established by the peace treaties. The British position was the same then as it is today: Great Britain was willing, as in 1919, to guarantee the Rhine frontier,

but would not undertake obligations which might involve her in a war to maintain the frontiers in Eastern Europe. With rejection of the Poincaré draft, the idea of an Anglo-French pact receded into the background.

WORK OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS FOR SECURITY AND DISARMAMENT, 1922-24

Parallel with French efforts to obtain security was the activity of the League of Nations looking toward disarmament and security. Under Article 8 of the Covenant, the Council was bound to formulate plans for "the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations". After intensive study the conclusion was reached that many governments could not reduce armaments without some guarantee of security, and that such assurance could be given by a general treaty of mutual defensive guarantee. The 1922 Assembly explicitly endorsed this conclusion, thus definitely linking security and disarmament.

(1) The Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance

The next step was the preparation of a Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance, which was referred by the 1923 Assembly to the various governments for their consideration. It provided for mutual assistance in case of aggression, on condition that certain specified provisions for reduction of armaments had been complied with. Combined with this general treaty, there were to be special defensive alliances between two or more states.

(2) The Geneva Protocol

Opposition to the Draft Treaty developed to such an extent that before the 1924 Assembly met, it had become apparent that it would fail of acceptance. As an alternative, the 1924 Assembly worked out the Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, generally called the Geneva Protocol, which linked security and disarmament with arbitration. Like the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance, the Geneva Protocol provided for sanctions in the form of military assistance to victims of aggression, but it went further by strengthening the procedure for the peaceful settlement of disputes, and by defining the aggressor as the state which refuses to comply with this procedure.

The Protocol was signed by a number of states including France, which regarded it as a guarantee of security. In Great Britain, however, the MacDonald government had been succeeded by a conservative government strongly in favor of the traditional British policy of avoiding entanglements on the Continent. At the meeting of the Council of the League last March, Mr. Chamberlain definitely rejected the Protocol on behalf of his government

GERMAN SECURITY PROPOSALS

(1) The Cuno Proposals of 1922

Almost a year after the Cannes Conference came the first German proposal for a pact of non-aggression. In December, 1922, with the American Secretary of State, Mr. Hughes, as intermediary, the German Chancellor, Dr. Cuno, proposed to the French Government an agreement in the following terms:

"The German, British, French and Italian Governments solemnly engage themselves towards one another and promise the United States not to make war amongst themselves for a generation (say, for thirty years), unless the matter is decided by popular vote, which should make war virtually impossible"

This proposal, which was the direct forerunner of the German proposal of February 9, 1925, was flatly rejected by M. Poincare, who characterized it as a "clumsy maneuver" by Germany on the eve of the Paris Conference on Reparations. In January, 1923, the French embarked upon the occupation of the Ruhr, and Franco-German relations became so strained that no further discussion of security was deemed practicable.

(2) The German Proposal of February 9, 1925

The British decision to reject the Protocol had become known well in advance of the March, 1925, meeting of the Council. It had also been rumored that Mr. Chamberlain was contemplating a revival of the original Anglo-French treaty of guarantee as a substitute for the Protocol. The idea has been advanced that it was alarm at this prospect which caused Germany to take the initiative by presenting a note to the French Government on February 9, 1925, making suggestions in regard to "the various forms which a pact of security might at present take".

The basis on which Germany proposed to negotiate included:

- (a) A pact among the Powers interested in the Rhine, agreeing not to wage war against each other;
- (b) A pact guaranteeing both the present territorial status on the Rhine and the demilitarization of the Rhineland as provided for by the Treaty of Versailles;
- (c) Arbitration treaties in connection with these pacts.

The note also suggested that the security pact might eventually be worked into a world convention on the lines of the Protocol.

NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO THE LOCARNO CONFERENCE

(1) The French Note - June 16, 1925

To this second German overture the French Government replied that it had examined the proposal with interest but must discuss the matter with France's allies before going further. Then followed protracted negotiations between France and Great Britain. The reply at last finally agreed upon welcomed the idea of the Rhineland pact, but stipulated certain conditions:

- (a) Germany must join the League of Nations without reservations.
- (b) The new pact must neither involve nor imply a modification of the Peace Treaties, nor of the treaties relating to the occupation of the Rhineland.
- (c) The signatories of the pact reserve their rights to take coercive action to compel the observance of existing treaties.
- (d) The arbitration treaties to be concluded between France and Germany and between Belgium and Germany supplementary to the Rhineland pact must be guaranteed jointly and severally by all the signatories of the pact.
- (e) The signatories of the Rhineland pact will have the option of guaranteeing the arbitration treaties to be concluded by Germany with Poland and Czechoslovakia.

France insisted on reserving the right to take coercive action to compel observance of arbitration treaties between Germany and her eastern neighbors, whereas Great Britain stuck to her policy of limiting her obligations to the territories covered by the Rhineland pact.

(2) The German Reply of July 20, 1925.

The German reply confined itself to general observations on three points, while reserving a more detailed discussion for the final negotiations:

- (a) While pointing out that the German proposal did not call for any modification of existing treaties, the German Government reserved "the possibility of adapting existing treaties at the proper time to changed circumstances by way of peaceful agreement".
- (b) Germany protested against the arrangement apparently contemplated in the French note whereby the Allied Governments would have the unilateral right to take coercive action at their discretion to compel observance of existing treaties, without resort to arbitration.
- (c) While conceding the linking of the two problems of Germany's entrance into the League and the conclusion of the pact, Germany

as a disarmed country objected to the obligations of Article 16 of the League Covenant to afford passage through her territory to the troops of League members at war with third parties.

(3) Conference of Jurists, September, 1925

As a result of a further exchange of notes on August 24 and 27, a preliminary conference of jurists representing Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy was held in London, beginning September 1. The jurists, whose deliberations were secret, discussed in detail various drafts of the security pact.

(4) The Security Conference

On September 15 an Allied note inviting Germany to a conference on the security pact was handed to the German government. The German acceptance of the Allied invitation, which was delivered on September 26, suggested October 5 as the date of the conference.

(5) The German Verbal Note on War Guilt

Simultaneously with the German acceptance, a verbal statement was made to the Allied ministers, accompanied by an aide-mémoire request asking for an assurance that Germany's entrance into the League should not constitute a re-admission of her war guilt, and for assurance in regard to the evacuation of Cologne. The raising of these issues by the German Government was due to pressure by the German nationalists.

This note produced an unpleasant impression in the Allied capitals. The replies of the Allies, which fixed Locarno and October 5 as the place and date of the security conference, pointed out that the two questions raised by the German note have no relation to the negotiations for a security pact. They maintain that the question of war guilt was settled by the Treaty of Versailles, and that the evacuation of Cologne depends on the fulfillment of Germany's disarmament obligations.

(6) Czechoslovakia Intervenes

Meanwhile Czechoslovakia had taken the first step to extend the proposed guarantees to Germany's eastern frontiers by official announcement to Germany, on September 20, of her readiness to negotiate an arbitration treaty. Both Poland and Czechoslovakia have made repeated requests to be represented at the security negotiations. It is understood, however, that the Locarno Conference will be limited to the Powers interested in Germany's western frontiers. Great Britain is unshaken in her determination to avoid commitments in regard to the eastern frontiers. If the Locarno Conference is successful, a second conference at which Poland and Czechoslovakia will be represented may be called to deal with the eastern frontiers.